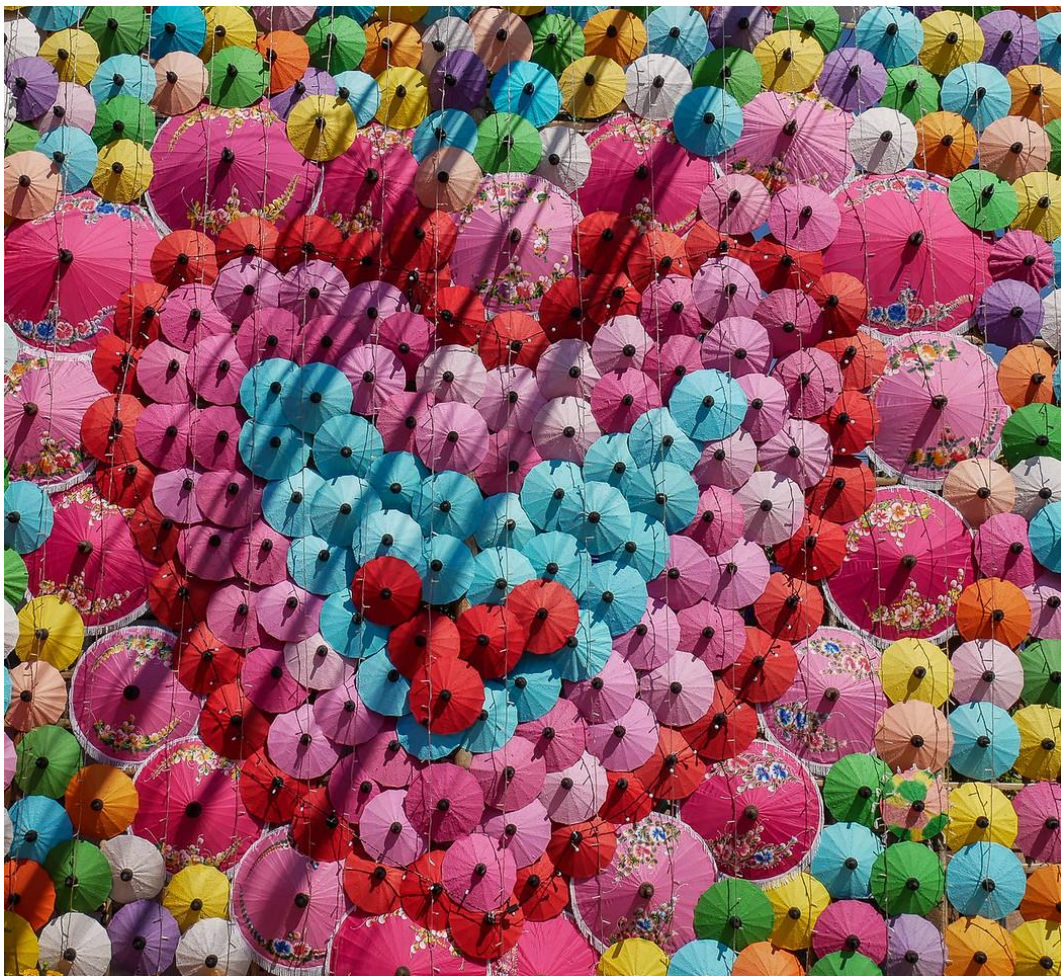


15 of the most colourful festivals in Thailand

Whatever month of the year you visit Thailand, there is a good chance there will be at least one festival taking place. Some of these events are celebrated nationwide, like **Songkran, the traditional Thai New Year** celebrations and **Loy Krathong**. And then there are regional festivals which reflect the local culture and heritage of the area such as **Poy Sang Long** which is held in parts of northern Thailand. Listed here in date order, check out our selection of fifteen of the most colourful festivals in Thailand.

1. Bo Sang Umbrella and Sankhampaeng Crafts Festival (January)

Located a short distance away from the city of Chiang Mai, the twin villages of Bo Sang and Sankhampaeng are famous for the production of handicrafts and traditional umbrellas.



Bo Sang Umbrella and Sankhampaeng Crafts Festival
(Photo: Roy Cavanagh / Thaizer.com)

The local products are celebrated with the annual Bo Sang Umbrella and Sankhampaeng Crafts Festival taking place in January. This may only be a small festival, but it's an enjoyable one to attend with the streets of Bo Sang decorated with umbrellas and parasols, musical performances and a parade featuring men and women in traditional dress carrying parasols.

2. Chinese Lunar New Year Festival (January/February)

In Thailand, there are three different chances to celebrate New Year. Alongside the celebrations on December 31, there is also the **Songkran Water**

Festival in mid-April which welcomes in the traditional Thai New Year. And for Thai people of Chinese descent (estimated to be around 14% of the population), the Chinese Lunar New Year Festival is another significant occasion.



Chinese New Year celebrations, Yaowarat Road, Bangkok
(Photo: GOLFX / Shutterstock.com)

The Chinese Lunar New Year Festival usually falls in January or February. Although it isn't an official holiday in Thailand, it is an important event in various locations across the country including Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket. With firecrackers, street parades and food stalls, it's a fun time to be in Thailand and join in the festivities.

3. Chiang Mai Flower Festival (February)

Taking place over the first weekend in February, the Chiang Mai Flower Festival is always a pleasure to attend. The event started in Chiang Mai in the 1970s and has since evolved into one of the most enjoyable festivals in Thailand.



Chiang Mai Flower Festival
(Photo: Roy Cavanagh / Thaizer.com)

Featuring floral decorations, street parades, local markets and music concerts, this is a fun event for all the family. Although the Chiang Mai Flower Festival attracts a mix of overseas and Thai tourists, the event retains its local identity. If you're visiting North Thailand in early February, add the Chiang Mai Flower Festival to your itinerary.

4. Poy Sang Long Festival (March/April)

This local festival is celebrated by the Shan (Tai Yai) community in northern Thailand with the best-known Poy Sang Long events taking place in Mae Hong Son.



Poy Sang Long Festival, Mae Hong Son (Photo: [Mick Shippen](#))

The **festival of the 'Precious Gems'** is a colourful three-day event held at temples in Mae Hong Son town and outlying villages to celebrate the ordination of young Shan boys into the monkhood. With elaborate ceremonies and parades, it's an important and proud family event.

5. Songkran: Traditional Thai New Year Water Festival (April)

Taking place in the middle of the hot season in April, the Songkran Festival welcomes in the traditional Thai New Year. For many Thai people, it's the most widely anticipated holiday of the year and an important family occasion. Normal activities are put on hold with playful water fights breaking out in villages, towns and cities across Thailand.



Songkran: Thai New Year Water Festival (Photo: Shutterstock)

Dousing one another with water is a traditional way of wishing good luck and good health for the year ahead. The water signifies new beginnings and symbolically washes away misfortune from the old year. Looking at photos or videos of the events gives you an idea of what to expect, but you have to experience Songkran in person to truly appreciate what makes it one of the most amazing festivals in the world.

6. Bung Ban Fai Rocket Festival, Isaan (May)

One of Thailand's quirkiest and noisiest festivals, the Bung Ban Fai Rocket Festival is held in the rice-growing regions of Thailand, especially in the **north-east region of Isaan**.



Rocket Festival Parade at Mahasarakham, Isaan
(Photo: Visun Khankasem / Shutterstock.com)

The timely arrival of the rains is crucial for a successful rice crop and according to Isaan folklore, this will only happen when the gods are in the mood for love. To encourage the gods to do their thing, a bawdy festival is held and phallus-shaped bamboo rockets launched high into the sky.

7. Phi Ta Khon Ghost Festival, Loei (June)

The annual **Phi Ta Khon Ghost Festival** is unique to the north-east town of Dan Sai in Loei province. For three days each year, Dan Sai transforms as masked revellers take to the streets.



Phi Ta Khon Ghost Festival, Loei (Photo: **Mick Shippen**)

Although the exact origins of the Phi Ta Khon Ghost Festival remain unclear, it's an event that is celebrated with much enthusiasm in this small town in Loei. The festival usually takes place in June, but if you are in the Dan Sai area there is an interesting museum which is open all year round where you can learn more about this fascinating local event.

8. Ubon Ratchathani Candle Festival (June/July)

The colourful Ubon Ratchathani Candle Festival is part of an ancient tradition to commemorate two significant events on the Buddhist calendar; Asahna Bucha and Khao Phansa. Asahna Bucha Day marks the day on which the Buddha delivered his first sermon. And the day after Asahna Bucha Day is Khao Phansa Day which marks the start of the Buddhist rains retreat period, sometimes referred to as 'Buddhist Lent'. It's a popular time for Thai Buddhists to visit their local temple to make donations and make merit. One traditional way of doing this is by donating candles to the wat and in some regions of Thailand this act of benevolence has developed into elaborate candle festivals.



Ubon Ratchathani Candle Festival
(Photo: Roy Cavanagh / Thaizer.com)

Candle Festivals take place at a number of locations around Thailand and one of the biggest and most colourful of these events is the Ubon Ratchathani Candle Festival. People from different community groups around Ubon Ratchathani province join together to craft giant candles and beautiful displays made from wax. It's a spectacular sight as the floats carrying the decorations are paraded through the streets of Ubon Ratchathani. Hundreds of elegantly dressed traditional dancers join the parade with the sound of Isaan folk music filling the air.

9. Phuket Vegetarian Festival (September/October)

A number of locations around Thailand observe the annual vegetarian festival, but it is Phuket where the biggest and most colourful activities take place. If you are in Thailand for the Vegetarian Festival, you may notice restaurants and food-stalls with yellow flags with red writing (often with Chinese script alongside the Thai writing). This denotes they are selling **vegetarian food** (*kin jeh*).



Vegetarian Festival, Phuket Town
(Photo: Jeve / Shutterstock.com)

The event is held over nine days and nine nights, usually in **September** or **October** for the Taoist lent period. It's a time to purify the body and abstain from eating meat, seafood and dairy products. In Phuket, the event features *mah song*; individuals who are said to become entranced during the festival and allow the spirits of the gods to enter their bodies. The *mah song* say when this happens they can feel no pain and this is demonstrated with piercings of various instruments into their cheeks or tongue. Traditionally, this would be ceremonial swords or daggers, but in more recent times has evolved into all manner of bizarre objects including beach parasols. While this may all seem strange, in Taoist belief the acts of self-mutilation by the *mah song* are said to take away bad luck and evil spirits from the community.

Awk Phansa

Awk Phansa marks the end of the Buddhist rains retreat period (sometimes referred to as 'Buddhist Lent'). Across Thailand, **Awk Phansa is marked by various religious ceremonies and special events**. And in many regions of the country there are festivals to celebrate Awk Phansa which reflect local culture and traditions.

10. Chong Para Festival, Mae Hong Son (October)

The Shan (Tai Yai) community in Mae Hong Son hold the Chong Para Festival to celebrate the return from heaven of the Lord Buddha. Decorated wooden towers, known as '*chong*', welcome the Buddha on his descent from

heaven. On the night of the Awk Phansa full moon, local communities join together to eat, dance and socialise. The towers are then paraded through the streets to the local temple where they are placed in front of the Buddha image (known as '*para*' in the local dialect).



Chong Para Festival, Mae Hong Son(Photo: Roy Cavanagh / Thaizer.com)

11. Rub Bua, Lotus Throwing Festival, Samut Prakan (October)

In Buddhism, a white lotus represents purity and is often used by Thai Buddhists when making-merit. And at Bang Phli in Samut Prakan province to the east of Bangkok, the act of presenting lotus flowers has evolved into the unique Rub Bua Festival.

The local community gather along the banks of the Samrong Canal waiting to greet a boat carrying a revered Buddha image. In an old tradition that has been passed down the generations, thousands of lotus flowers are thrown as an act of making merit. It is thought to be auspicious if the lotus lands in the boat containing the Buddha image.

12. Lai Reua Fai, Illuminated Boat Festival, Nakhon Phanom (October)

Held on the Mekong River in the north-east city of Nakhon Phanom, the Lai Reua Fai Festival has evolved from humble origins into a colourful, large-scale event.



Lai Reua Fai Festival, Nakhon Phanom(Photo: Shutterstock)

For centuries, it has been an Awk Phansa tradition in parts of Isaan to float small boats made from bamboo or banana tree trunks on the Mekong. The boats are illuminated with candles and offerings may be added inside as a way of paying respect to Buddha and to the Nagas and water spirits. Over the years this has evolved into a more elaborate festival with huge, beautifully illuminated boats used at the event in Nakhon Phanom.

13. Loy Krathong Festival (November)

Celebrated nationwide, Loy Krathong is one of Thailand's most beautiful festivals. The exact date varies each year depending on the full moon, but usually falls in November. Loy Krathong is an opportunity for people to symbolically float away their troubles and pay their respects to the water spirits.



Loy Krathong(Photo: Shutterstock)

The traditional way of making a krathong uses natural materials; the trunk of a banana tree and banana leaves. The krathong is then decorated with colourful flowers. Before floating on the nearest stretch of water, incense sticks and candles are placed inside the krathong and lit. A silent wish or prayer is then offered before placing the krathong on the water.

14. Yi Peng Lantern Festival (November)

The **Yi Peng Lantern Festival** is celebrated across the north of Thailand. Although it is Chiang Mai which is often associated with Yi Peng, the festival is an old Lanna tradition and takes place in a number of other northern provinces including Chiang Rai, Nan, Phrae and Phayao.



Yi Peng Lantern Festival, Chiang Mai (Photo: Shutterstock)

In ancient times, Yi Peng was a separate festival to celebrate the end of the rainy season and the start of the cool season. In more recent times, Yi Peng has been incorporated into the festivities for Loy Krathong. Colourful hanging lanterns are placed outside homes, temples and shops, and sky lanterns (*khom loy*) are launched into the night sky. In Buddhist culture, the light of a lantern represents the moving away from darkness into a brighter future.

15. Christmas Star Festival, Sakon Nakhon (December)

It's estimated that around 95% of the Thai population are Buddhist. And while Christmas might not be a religious event for most Thai people, you will still see festive decorations at a number of locations during December. However, for Thai Christians, the Christmas period is celebrated as a religious occasion and nowhere more so than in Ban Ta Rae in Sakon Nakhon. This area of north-east Thailand is home to the country's largest Roman Catholic community and they mark the festive period with the Christmas Star Parade.



Sakon Nakhon Christmas Star Parade (Photo: aimpol buranet / Shutterstock.com)

Vietnamese culture in Isaan

Vietnamese influences can be seen in the architecture, food and culture of Sakon Nakhon and neighbouring Nakhon Phanom province. This corner of north-east Thailand provided a safe refuge for emigrants from Vietnam during the French colonial period and again during the Vietnam War.

In Ban Ta Rae, the Thai-Vietnamese community decorate the outside of their homes with star-shaped lamps at Christmas. A Christmas Day mass is held at St Michael's Cathedral and a colourful parade of giant illuminated stars takes place along the streets outside.

Quote From: <https://fanclubthailand.co.uk/15-of-the-most-colourful-festivals-in-thailand/>